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ABSTRACT

This research project explored the manner in which veteran school principals learn of, and become committed to, new perspectives and practices. Personal stories of formative and transformative change from the careers of 23 school principals were collected and analyzed comparatively. Four analytic frameworks emerged from the project and provide a foundation for the ongoing, generic study of principal learning: career route maps, a pathways-to-the-principalship flowchart, a storyline construction process, and a means of interpreting one's thread of learning. The findings indicate that principals' professional learning is influenced by: (1) impressions of teachers and schooling formed in early childhood; (2) a largely unaware personal orientation to learning, which can be seen as a combination of four dynamics--relationships, context, characteristics, and concepts--with one dominating the others; (3) a unique, consistent story-thread that weaves through a career and serves as both a guide and a catalyst; and (4) progression through a common sequence of perspective development stages. (Contains 72 references, 1 figure, and 2 tables.) (Author/RT)

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# Leaders as Learners:

# An Inquiry into the Formation and Transformation of Principals' Professional Perspectives

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## Abstract

This research project explored the manner in which veteran school principals learn of, and become committed to, new perspectives and practices. Personal stories of formative and transformative change from the careers of 23 school principals were collected and analyzed comparatively. Four analytic frameworks emerged from the project and provide a foundation for the ongoing, generic study of principal learning: career route maps, a pathways-to-the-principalship flowchart, a storyline construction process, and a means of interpreting one's thread of learning. The findings indicate that principals' professional learning is influenced by (a) impressions of teachers and schooling formed in early childhood, (b) a largely unaware personal orientation to learning, which can be seen as a combination of four dynamics—relationships, context, characteristics, and concepts—with one dominating the others, (c) a unique, consistent story-thread that weaves through a career and serves as both a guide and a catalyst, and (d) progression through a common sequence of perspective development stages.

# Leaders as Learners: An Inquiry into the Formation and Transformation Of Principals' Professional Perspectives

Consistent with the perpetual ebb and flow of thinking about educational improvement (Cremin, 1964; Tyack & Cuban, 1995) the principal is once again being seen as a critical contributor to superior school operations. As with scholarship on the principalship in the past, the current deliberation seeks to establish a vision of the role that will expedite the perceived changes needed to meet the demands of improved school environments for the existing and prospective era (Beck & Murphy, 1993). In the interest of generating a vision for the principalship of the new era school, principals have been called upon to be more effective leaders (Blumberg & Greenfield, 1986), to be both managers and instructional leaders (Sharp & Walter, 1994; Sybouts & Wendel, 1994), to be reflective in their practice (Sergiovanni, 1995), to be transformational (Murphy & Seashore Louis, 1994), to be caring (Beck, 1994), to be facilitative (Conley & Goldman, 1994), to become expert problem solvers (Leithwood & Steinbach, 1995), to implement Deming's notions of quality improvement (Leonard, 1996; Monk, 1993), to be constructivist leaders (Lambert et al., 1995), to be postmodern leaders (Maxcy, 1994), to be teachers of teachers (Webster, 1994), to be bifocal--both logical and artistic--(Deal & Peterson, 1994), to achieve professional actualization (Parkay & Hall, 1992), to operate using coactive empowerment (Hurty, 1995), to be sense makers (Ackerman, Donaldson, & van der Bogert, 1996), and to be anticipatory (Leithwood, Rutherford, & van der Vegt, 1987) among others.

Generally, efforts to revitalize the principalship concentrate on one of three approaches: (a) through redesigns of administrator preservice programs, (b) through inservice professional development programs, or (c) through the redesign of the induction and assessment process at the district level (Daresh & Playko, 1992; Leithwood, et al., 1987; Murphy & Hallinger, 1987;

Murphy & Pimentel, 1996). However, delineating a revised notion of the principalship and redesigning professional preparation, induction, and development programs may be necessary but are not sufficient conditions for reforming or renewing the practice of the individuals holding the role. It is necessary, as well, to advance an understanding of the particular ways in which individuals in the role are influenced in the formulation of a subjective understanding of their work. How do nonexpert principals become experts? How do principals learn to be caring administrators, servant leaders, bifocal leaders, transformative leaders, or to be actualized professionals? How does one become a constructivist? It is not satisfying to rest with the assumption that straightforward exposure to new ideas will be enough to spur a perspective transformation among established professionals, particularly those as busy and inundated as school principals. The necessity of attending to a professional's subjective understandings in order to instigate sustainable change and growth has been considered and described by writers in various disciplines: in principalship studies as mindscapes (Sergiovanni, 1995), as professional stances (Ball, 1996), as personal formations (Daresh & Playko, 1992), and as idiosyncratic frameworks (Blumberg & Greenfield, 1986); in organizational and professional studies as mental models (Senge, 1990), and as theories-in-action (Schon, 1983); in adult learning theory as meaning schemes and meaning perspectives (Mezirow, 1991), and as experience reservoirs (Knowles, 1980). However, while some research and general theorizing has focused on determining how this subjective understanding of practice is actually formed or altered (Blank, 1996; Mezirow, 1991; Schon, 1983), little has been done to explore this process among school principals. This paper reports on a research project that addressed the need for a systematic inquiry into the phenomenon of how principals' subjective philosophies about professional practice are formed and modified over time, and how they serve to direct an individual's current

practice. The project supports practical calls from professionals (e.g. Barth, 1990; 1997) for more attention to and study of the means by which principals learn and, through the construction of generic frameworks for the study of principals, it supports moves toward the formation of a theory of the principalship.

Three types of work have dominated recent literature on the principalship: (a) those emphasizing the technical preparation of beginning principals--training them to be both managers and instructional leaders (e.g. Sharp & Walter, 1994; Sybouts & Wendel, 1994; Webster 1994); (b) those seeking to identify and disseminate the conceptual approaches and problem-solving skills used by successful, effective, or expert principals (e.g. Deal & Peterson, 1994; Hallinger, Leithwood, & Murphy, 1993; Lambert, et al., 1995; Leithwood & Steinbach, 1995; Leithwood, Chapman, Corson, Hallinger, & Hart, 1996; Leonard, 1996; Maehr & Midgley, 1996; Monk, 1993); and (c) those phenomenally describing the pragmatic craft of the principalship toward a reality-based understanding of the role (e.g. Barth, 1990; Blumberg, 1989; Donaldson, 1991; Nelson, 1989; Parkay & Hall, 1992; Sergiovanni, 1995). A fourth, newly emerging theme advocates the philosophy of caring developed by Nel Noddings (1984) as the foundation for a new means of undertaking and understanding the principalship (Beck, 1994; Beck & Murphy, 1993).

However, the works emphasizing these themes do not provide a research-based view or theory about how principals learn. Instead, through a literature review, and through conversations with principals and principal educators, I learned that it was conventionally perceived that principals' learning is informal, experience based, and peer related. But, such a broad view does little to generate an understanding of the learning processes per se or to identify supportive or inhibitive influences. Blumberg and Greenfield (1986) specifically identified the

need for further inquiry into principal learning as a result of an earlier study. They conducted in-depth interviews with eight principals who had a positive reputation among peers. The interviews were open and unstructured and the researchers' purpose was simply to learn more about the way in which the principals thought about their role and themselves as professionals. The authors' general conclusion was that each principal "seemed to have his or her own theory of the principal's role, one that stemmed from his or her own personality, experience, and training" (p. 7). They note that this finding was problematic for the effective school leadership movement. The literature on effective school leadership posits that since the problems faced by principals are common from school to school then effective leadership must be common from school to school. Thus, it is believed, effective leadership can be generated and assessed through lists of characteristics or behaviors of effective leaders. However, their own findings constrain such a proposition by indicating that effective leadership can come in many forms and produce many different approaches to similar problems:

> While these principals definitely have a "framework" for understanding their work world, it would only remotely resemble the sort of highly abstract and rational conceptual frame one would find in the usual textbook on school administration. It is, instead, highly idiosyncratic to the needs and dispositions of the particular principal and the context of the particular work situation. (p. 144)

This finding prompts questions for further inquiry: How are these idiosyncratic frameworks formed, How are they altered, How do they affect current practice, If they are idiosyncratic, can anything in general be said about principals' perspective development? Blumberg and Greenfield supplied some hints in their descriptive narratives about answers to these questions, but did not

address them directly. Instead, they called for further study on principals' idiosyncratic perspectives as an element of school improvement through enhanced leader effectiveness.

As mentioned, both the literature and conventional wisdom point to the importance of a principal's background as an agent of learning. And so, the first step in coming to understand the development of a principal's perspective would be a review of his or her career path against a general scheme of others' movement to the principalship. Yet, the commonly accepted notions that I encountered about the career-step influences on an individual's movement toward a principalship were not based on research and were too general to be of service in understanding the details of perspective development. (See Sybouts and Wendel, 1994, and Donaldson, 1991, for general presentations.) As well, precareer and early-career pathways were completely unaddressed. Thus, the starting point for this study was to devise a generic means of describing the similarities and differences of common career paths for becoming a principal. Such an outline would serve as a background structure for understanding formative and transformative learning experiences along the way. Hence, the first set of research questions, the Career Pathway Questions, were

- What are common pathways to the principalship?
- What is a functional means of describing a career pathway in comparison to others?
- What, if any, are the general points of influence across career paths?

Another aspect of the conventional belief about principal learning is that it is peer and context related but that it is also connected to one's personal worldview. This indicated that the process is dynamic and complex. However, since the goal of my project was to determine what, if anything, could be said in whole about principal learning--at least for a bounded sample of principals--the next step would be to collect and sift through detailed descriptions of particular

formative and transformative learning experiences in search of underlying patterns of influence. This indication formed the bedrock of the investigation and guided the second set of research questions, the Patterns of Influence Questions.

- What are the particular formative and transformative learning experiences of a sample of principals across the identified career paths?
- What is a functional means of elucidating influential learning across principals?
- What are the patterns of influence affecting these principals' perspectives?

The final research questions were meant to move toward a more complete and intersubjective understanding of how a particular principal's perspective affects her or his learning and practice. It is this level of understanding that school reformers and principal educators must strive to achieve in order to succeed in their efforts. The Effects on Practice Questions were

- How do the identified learning influences emerge in principals' practice?
- If these principals have idiosyncratic perspectives, what, if anything, can be said in general about how their perspective affects their practice?
- What might school reformers and principal educators do to more effectively affect principals' perspectives?

The research questions were purposefully posed to reveal insights about how principals' perspectives are formed and transformed while also striving to support a movement to build a theory of the principalship by seeking general schemes for the study of principal learning.

## Methods

Since a prominent approach to the topic of inquiry--the formation and transformation of veteran school principals' professional perspectives--was not revealed in the literature, an

exploratory inquiry was indicated. As well, the data to be managed in this project involved the private, subjective understandings of participants. Together, these factors pointed to the use of qualitative methods (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles & Huberman, 1994). The study's overall attempt to attend to the real and particular lives of a certain group of professionals within the confines of their social role further implied the use of critical (Carr and Kemmis, 1986), ethnographic (Dobbert, 1982; Spradley, 1979), and phenomenological (Van Manen, 1990) principles in the treatment and report of data. However, since the aim of the project was narrower than, for example, the culture of principals, it was necessary to consider methodological concerns for a more pointed investigation. Specifically, since the clearest way to directly explore the topic would be through the comparative study of the particular experiences of a number of principals from a variety of backgrounds and school environments, a multifaceted approach was needed: (a) a narrative, life history method for the collection of individual participants' stories of formative and transformative learning experiences; (b) a cross case method to organize the data and manage the search for patterns of influence across individual story sets; and (c) a natural history method for the thick interpretation of each particular case. Merriam (1988) offered a theoretical guide for such a multicase approach:

> A qualitative inductive multicase study seeks to build abstractions across cases. One attempts "to build a general explanation that fits each of the individual cases, even though the cases will vary in their details" (Yin, 1984, p. 108). The researcher attempts to see "processes and outcomes that occur across many cases or sites" and to understand "how such processes are bent by specific local variables" (Miles and Huberman, 1984, p. 151). . . . Groups, or cases, should be selected for their power both to maximize and to minimize differences in the phenomenon of interest. (p. 154)

The importance of the participants' biographies as an instrument of learning suggested the use of interpretive biography (Denzin, 1989) and life-history approaches (McAdams, 1993). Dominicé, (1990), used life-history methods for the construction of educational biographies of teachers, however, his method is more conducive for use with classroom gatherings of prospective teachers than with dispersed veteran principals. Data collection would need to be more broad and deep in order to garner a variety of participant outlooks of significant profundity. This directed the use of narrative, in-depth interviews; yet, they would need to be carefully designed in order to meet the needs of this particular study and to address the concerns of the research community (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990). The use of in-depth, narrative interviews to elicit insight regarding the personal perspectives of a particular study group has been modeled in other studies in a variety of fields (Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, 1996; Loughlin, 1993; Reeher, 1996). However, my own professional experience with the use of in-depth conversational formats for the purposes of information gathering, the development of intersubjective understanding, and critical dialogue left me unsatisfied with the models and recommendations regarding participant interviewing available in current writings on research methods. Consequently, I developed an interview procedure particularly suited to this project, but also serviceable in other realms, based on aspects of other theorists' suggestions (Denzin, 1989; Dobbert, 1982; Holstein & Gubrium, 1995; McAdams, 1993; Merriam, 1988; Spradley, 1979). The method, which I call perspective interviewing (McGough, 1997), involved asking open-ended and probing questions about a principal's career, decision-making process, and leadership style that rotated around the theme of learning toward a critical revelation of the origins and evolution of a professional perspective. In the process a genuinely intersubjective mood was created so that the interview itself became a learning event. I used this technique to elicit stories

of significant experiences throughout participants' lives as related to one's current professional view. Each participant's stories were managed as a set and treated as one case.

To fulfill the second method of the multifaceted approach, I needed a means of examining the cases both individually and collectively. A comparative case study approach typically provides the opportunity for either a cross-case investigation of particular variables or the in-depth consideration of individual idiosyncrasies, but I wanted a synthesis of the two. Miles and Huberman (1994) discuss this problem in their review of comparative case study methods. After describing numerous "case-oriented" or "variable-oriented" approaches they ponder the need for, and possibilities of, "mixed strategies" (p. 176):

> Abbott (1992b), too, has interesting ideas on the problem of cross-case analysis. He shows how sheer variable-oriented cases "lose the complexity and narrative order" of the cases, fragmenting them, and cannot follow the "plot" of each case. The issue, he suggests, is how to do cross-case analysis that preserves narrative sequence, "a social science expressed in terms of typical stories . . . . We need generic models for types of causality and for 'narrative steps' " (p. 76). The general strategy is one of evolving and testing *generic narrative models* for such issues as organizational birth, merger, division, and death. (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 177, original italics)

This study can be seen as striving to formulate research-generated versions of generic narrative models of principal learning. Miles and Huberman provided a general approach to the creation of such generic narrative models, which can be summarized as (a) construct a depiction of each case through a "more or less standard set of variables" (p. 176), (b) formulate an analytic procedure based on those variables to display and study each case while allowing the variables to change, and (c) "stack" (p. 176) the displays for each case together in a search for patterns.

Miles and Huberman (1994) also describe research designs that adhere to the three steps. Two of these approaches strive to maintain the variable and narrative balance in graphic displays. The authors refer to these two designs as "composite sequence analysis" (p. 177). Both of these involve the use of concise descriptors of critical components of the narratives linked together in a flowchart-like network showing periodic or processual development. Understanding and implication come from reading the entire display at once as a compressed individual story set against a broad benchmark background. After each case is charted, all of the cases' flows are charted together to display similarities and contrasts. The result is a single graphic display containing each individual's story in connection and comparison to the others. One of these designs was developed by Huberman (1995) to display the similarities and peculiarities of teachers' career development. This composite sequence analysis method, and Huberman's design in particular, served as the basis for my own cross-case analysis. I employed this method twice: once to address the first set of research questions concerning patterns of career progression, and again to address the second set, looking for patterns of learning influences across careers. The details and findings are presented in the next section of the paper.

The third front of the multifaceted analysis, directly addressing the third set of research questions, entailed re-reading each principal's story set through the lens of their revealed patterns of career progression and learning influences as a means of generating a (more) genuine understanding of the foundation of their perspective, a recognition of how it has evolved throughout their careers, and a grasp of how it affects their current practice. Such a spiraling analysis that first uses a data set to formulate patterns and then re-examines the data set through those patterns suggests a natural history approach:

> The essence of the natural history approach is careful and painstaking observation, guided by informed questions and followed by generalization based upon the grouping of observed facts and then by a testing of the derived generalization through further observation. (Kimball, 1974, in Dobbert, 1982, p, 8)

The analysis required multiple sets of codes. I began each step of the investigation with a few codes based on the questions and added new codes as necessary to identify and comparatively analyze emergent themes. Miles and Huberman (1994) also recognize this developmental coding process:

> One method of creating codes--the one we prefer--is that of creating a provisional "start list" of codes prior to fieldwork. That list comes from the conceptual framework, list of research questions, hypotheses, problem areas, and/or key variables that the researcher brings to the study. (p. 58)
>
> Still other codes emerge progressively during the data collection. These are better grounded empirically, and are especially satisfying to the researcher who has uncovered an important local factor. They also satisfying other readers, who can see that the researcher is open to what the site has to say, rather than determined to force-fit the data into preexisting codes. (p. 62)

Participants for the study were proportionally recruited from three typical school environments: urban, suburban, and rural/small town. Participation was also balanced by school level (elementary, middle/junior high, and high school), and gender. An effort was made to attend to ethnic and religious affiliation diversity as well. However, since the region of the country in which the project was conducted provided limited variation in these realms, a mixture was achieved but a balance was not. Finally, principals of specialty schools were sought along

with principals of regular schools. Participant recruitment was chiefly through researcher solicitation. While some peer referrals were graciously accepted, generally, I considered it unwise to recruit through participant referrals since the goal was to seek a variety of typical principals instead of known experts, or great leaders, or particularly successful principals. Veteran status was considered to be five years of experience in educational administration, primarily in a principalship. All participants currently held a regular principalship position (i.e. they were "in charge" of their own building). The sample consisted of twenty-three principals. Interviews lasting between an hour and an hour-and-a-half were conducted over a three-month period.

## Results

### Routes Maps

The analysis for the career pathway questions began with repeated close readings of each interview, allowing similarities and peculiarities of the principals' backgrounds to arise for coding. After numerous renditions, I was struck by the way in which the influences on the participants' perspectives were divisible into notable intervals: (a) childhood and early schooling, (b) college and professional training, (c) first interval of a career--teacher and teacher leader, (d) second interval of a career--entry-level educational administrator, and (e) third interval of a career--regular principalship.

I drafted a Participant Profile of each interview based on these intervals. The profiles are a condensation of each case and served as working documents. Each profile includes participant personal data, compressed versions of the stories and experiences arranged as narrative points within the intervals, a guide to the number of years spent in each stage, and outlooks and

catalysts at transitions periods. Next, in concurrence with Miles and Huberman's second step, I developed a Route Map for each participant's biographic journey to the principalship. Each person's route was depicted in a code string. For example, Jack Howard's Route Map (all names are pseudonyms) is P-O-STT-T(5)-AP(13)-RP(2). This route is read as follows: Jack had a positive (P) early childhood exposure to a formal learning setting, had career plans other (O) than education upon entering college, but switched to a teacher training (STT) program while in college, served as a teacher (T) for five years, then as an assistant principal (AP) for thirteen, and has been in a regular principalship (RP)--fully managing his own building--for two years. This is a six-code route. Notice that the number of codes does not necessarily correspond to the number of intervals. These codes are meant to serve as the basis of a generic lexicon for reading a principal's career path and it is anticipated that continued study would refine and stabilize the list. I employed eighteen route codes in this study.

The only route codes that all participants had in common were teaching and the regular principalship. Clumping the background codes revealed eight standard routes (numbered R.1 through R.8) between these two common career points. The eight standard routes fall into four broad groups and further divide into close variations. The four broad groups are direct routes, classic routes, teacher leader routes, and school leader routes.

Direct routes entail movement from a teaching position to an entry-level principalship to a regular principalship. Three participants followed one of the direct routes. Entry-level principalships, for the purposes of this analysis, include either a step principalship (SP) or a provisional principalship (PP). The term step principalship indicates the sort of position one would take to gain some experience as a principal with the full intention of moving on within a few years. Here the principalship position is a stepping-stone to another principalship in a larger,

or more prestigious, or better paying area. A provisional principalship refers to those situations in which a person moves into a principalship position on a temporary or partial basis, generally for the purposes of fulfilling the responsibilities of the job while the district seeks a more permanent arrangement. Typically, this would include interim principalships, principal internships, and the teaching principalship often used in small districts to reduce costs. I found two principals who followed a direct route with a step principalship (R.1, T-SP-RP). One (Edgar Bates.) spent his early years as a principal of a reservation school and then moved to a small town school where he remained for twenty-five years. The other (Mark Green) accepted the principalship of a small town school after teaching for one year in a public school and two years in the Peace Corps. He stayed for two years then moved to a suburban school as an assistant principal for a number of years until eventually moving into a regular principalship in that district. In my analysis, I refer to lateral moves or steps down in responsibility for the purposes of better positioning for future jobs as mid-term shifts (MS or M-). Thus, Mark Green could be said to have made a mid-term shift when moving from a step principalship in a small town to an assistant principalship in a suburban district so as to be in position for a regular principalship in the future, which is how it worked out. His route map shows the mid-term shift, with six years in the mid-term AP position and one in a mid-term interim principalship position: P-O-STT-T(3)-SP(2)-MAP(6)-MPP(1)-RP(3). These two principals saw the step principalship as a valuable part of their professional development. Edgar Bates lived as a minority and needed to operate a school on a tiny budget. Mark Green came to see the hard lessons of an undervalued public service in a struggling community.

Only one participant (Ann Simmons) followed a direct route with a provisional principalship (R.2, T-PP-RP). She taught in her own small hometown for many years eventually

taking on the duties of a teaching principal. As she was considering leaving the profession for a job that would allow her to relocate to an urban area, she was offered a position as a principal intern in a suburban school. She accepted that position and stayed on as a regular principal after a year. Since her move to the suburban district in the intern principal capacity was a move to increased responsibility it is not a mid-term shift but still a provisional principalship.

The classic routes involve moving from teaching to an assistant principalship to a regular principalship (R.3, T-AP-RP). This is the route most typically imagined for the principalship and it may be evolving into a standard progression. Six of the participants followed the standard classic route. Five went straightaway along the route, and one (Amy Boots) experienced a mid-term shift which included moving from an assistant principalship to an interim principalship to another assistant principalship to another interim principalship and finally to a regular principalship. Her story was poignant, as is indicated by the complex mid-term shift. After eight years of loyal service as an assistant principal in a small town high school she was appointed interim principal for a year when the principal moved into the superintendency. However, as it became clear that she would not be seriously considered by the board as a candidate to continue in the regular principalship due to her sex, she needed to make a series of lateral moves in order to remain in contention for principalship positions in other districts. She eventually settled in a suburban school.

The five participants who followed the standard version of the classic route had distinct experiences along the way as well. Three (Robert Gray, Mary Adams, and Rita Harding) served long teaching careers (18, 25, and 13 years) while the other two (Jack Howard and Jenna Robinson) taught for shorter periods (5 and 2 years). These two and the one who taught for thirteen years (Rita Harding) all served as assistant principals for ten or more years, while the

other two (Robert Gray and Mary Adams) served two and six years. Thus, even within the standard version of this route there are wide variations of experience.

The teacher leader routes to the principalship provide some of the most interesting and complex variations, as well as some of the best surprises. By teacher leader (TL) I am referring to positions or roles a teacher takes on that involve responsibility for communicating and decision making with other teachers, administrators, and parents in collaborative and authoritative ways that go beyond the normal duties of a regular classroom teacher. In this study a number of teacher leader positions were identified: curriculum specialist, staff development coordinator, special education specialist, coach, gifted education coordinator, department head, athletic director, resource room teacher. Many other such positions may exist. Some teacher leader positions require special training, others do not. All entail a special expertise. While these positions do not always require educational administration certification, they often require management skills such as planning, budgeting, and reporting, as well as leadership talents for parent conferences, staff negotiations, and deliberations about students. The participants of this study often referred to such positions as "quasi-administrative" to indicate the broader realm of decision-making authority they entailed.

Ten of the study participants followed a teacher leader route to the principalship: this was the most used of any of the four route groups. The teacher leader group also produced the greatest number of routes with four standard routes and four variations. The four standard routes and a few of their variations are described here. Three participants followed the first of these standard routes, the teacher leader to provisional principal route (R.4, T-TL-PP-RP). One of those three (Henry Swanson) was a coach, one (Richard Fox) was a curriculum specialist, and one (Marion Woodruff) was a special education coordinator. Henry Swanson became a teaching

principal when the district ran low on funds, then moved into a principalship when the district combined with two other small districts in the area. Richard Fox was urged toward the principalship by an encouraging principal and a visionary superintendent. He served as a principal intern for a year then became a regular principal. Marion Woodruff enjoyed the consultative nature of her role as a special education coordinator and decided to pursue an educational administration degree. While completing her administrative internship the school's principal moved to the superintendency and she was offered the principalship on an interim basis. She continued on as a regular principal after completing her degree work.

Two individuals followed the next standard route of the teacher leader group (R.5, T-TL-AP-RP). One, Shirley Jackson, became a resource room teacher after her first three years in a third grade classroom. She found the new position to be much less confining and decided to find a way to avoid going back to being a regular classroom teacher. She soon moved to a curriculum coordinator position and decided to pursue administrative course work. After completing the certification she obtained an assistant principalship and was moved into the regular principalship in her first year when the principal was promoted. The other, Monica O'Brien, became a department head in her second year as a teacher and soon after was encouraged to pursue the district's administrative training program. She became an assistant principal and then the district's youngest principal and its first women principal at the secondary level.

Two participants followed the teacher leader to district administrator route, one with a mid-term shift (R.6, T-TL-DA-RP, and R.6a, T-TL-DA-MS-RP). The first of these (Lisa Brown) became a Title 1 coordinator for a large district after serving as a teacher and special education specialist. She moved into the principalship from the district-level position because she wanted to be closer to the students and to have a more direct influence on their experiences. The other

participant (Ruth Harlow) became a staff development coordinator at a large school in a small town after many years of teaching. From that position she was promoted by the superintendent to a district-level coordinator post guiding the district's implementation of a middle school program. Afterward she served as an assistant principal for four years and then returned to the district-level as a human resource coordinator. And, finally, from there she moved to a regular principalship.

The final standard route of the teacher leader group is one that was not found among the participants of this study (R.7, T-TL-SP-RP), but which is implied by a variation of it followed by one participant (R.7a, T-TL-SP-MS-RP). This participant (John Jerome) became the principal of the district in which he taught and served as athletic director. In an effort to expand his experience base beyond one school and to find his own voice as a principal, he wanted to move to another district in another region of the country. He moved to an assistant principalship of a school with a retiring principal for two years and then moved into that position.

The last routes identified in this study are the school leader routes. By school leaders I am referring to those individuals who were previously directors of educational programs or principals of nonpublic schools but chose to move toward a public school principalship. As with the teacher leader routes, no mention is made in the principalship literature of the movement of school leaders from parochial or specialty schools into public school principalships. Four participants followed these routes, one the standard version (R.8, T-SL-RP) and three the variation with a mid-term shift (R.8a, T-SL-MS-RP). The individual of the standard version (Bill Jones) was the program director of an open school program within a suburban school. When the program expanded and moved to its own building he became the principal. Two of those following the variation (Joseph Mills and Willa Trimble) were principals of parochial schools

who moved to assistant principalship positions (and in one case to a teaching position) in public school settings in preparation for regular principalships. The final participant (Joshua Goldman) had a background as a clinical therapist before becoming a special education teacher and then the director of a special education school. He also served an assistant principalship in a public school in preparation to taking on a regular principalship.

Pathways to the Principalship

The Pathways to the Principalship Flowchart, a graphic composite of all the routes, Miles and Huberman's third step, is displayed in Figure 1: Pathways to the Principalship. A number of interesting points can be garnered from a study of the flowchart. For example, only one person (Shirley Jackson) had a potently unpleasant early childhood school experience. The bulk of the participants had a positive or benign early childhood experience with school and formal learning. About half had plans other than education upon entering college and all but one of those switched into education during the college years. Thus, only one participant (Joshua Goldman) had professional experience outside of education.

Though the participants regarded their individual careers as a united journey, there were clear distinctions between different professional segments. As mentioned above, I identified three intervals. Career Interval 1 encompasses an educator's time of service as a teacher or teacher leader. Career Interval 2 includes entry-level educational administration positions. And Career Interval 3 indicates a regular principalship. This structure helps to depict the differences in social and organizational expectations that influence an individual in different career periods. When in a teacher leader role, individuals generally thought of themselves as teachers, not administrators. Only later did they come to realize that such roles are "quasi-administrative." As well, most of the participants thought of themselves as primarily administrators once they

entered Career Interval 2 roles. In particular, the assistant principalship is thought of as part of one's principalship career, and yet, at the same time, is considered to be a much different position from the regular principalship. Often if asked, "How long have you been a principal?" a participant would respond "X" years. Only to have it revealed later in the conversation that a portion of those years was spent as an assistant principal. Though, as one (Robert Gray) participant commented about being a principal compared to being a teacher or an assistant principal "It's a whole nuther perspective!" Similarly, though provisional and step principalships are full responsibility administrative roles, the temporary nature of such positions seems to lessen their impressionableness a bit. When participants spoke about getting their own building, they meant a principalship with the potential of longevity, one in which they could make a lasting difference in a place where they could invest in the community, staff, and students. This marks the distinction between Career Interval 2 and Career Interval 3 positions.

One can see on the flowchart that the teacher leader roles served the largest block of participants on their movement beyond teaching positions (n=10). However, it should also be noted that fifteen of the participants passed through an assistant principalship along their journeys: six directly from teaching, two from teacher leader roles, and another seven through a mid-term shift. The assistant principalship is clearly the predominant initiator for the principalship. Yet, it is not necessarily the most influential step for every individual.

The Route Maps and the Pathways Flowchart can be read together to generate further insights. For example, the routes with the least number of steps can be thought of as the most efficient. Of these, the most popular was Route 3, T-AP-RP, followed by five participants. There are three other single-step routes each followed by only one participant: Route 1, T-SP-RP, followed by the oldest participant of the study (Edgar Bates) who may have experienced the

norms of an earlier era; Route 2, T-PP-RP, followed by a woman (Ann Simmons) who moved into a regular principalship after one year as a principal intern and two years as a teaching principal in a previous district; and Route 8, T-SL-RP, followed by a man (Bill Jones) who moved into the principalship when the open school program he was directing within an elementary school expanded.

The T-AP-RP route is also the most popular of all possible routes with five participants. The next most popular routes were each followed by three participants T-TL-PP-RP, and T-SL-MS-RP. One route, T-TL-AP-RP, was followed by two participants. All of the ten other participants followed their own unique routes. With such great variation in pathways it is hard to imagine any single set of criteria, standards, or principles that could be used to guide or evaluate a principal's professional development.

Storylines

The analysis for the second set of research questions involved the search for patterns in the influences on participants' perspectives across their career paths. I wanted to find a means of seeing the essence of the biographic formation of each participant's perspective in a way that would also allow for examination of all participants' perspective formations for common themes: influence themes. The Route Maps and Pathways Flowchart served as an organizing backdrop for this investigation. I devised a new coding scheme and conducted another cross-case comparison in search of descriptors that would highlight particular perspective influences. What evolved is a structure and process I refer to as Storyline construction and analysis. This structure provides an initial framework for generating generic narrative models of learning among principals.

The Storyline construction involved identifying the unique influences on each participant's perspective at the identified stages of the journey to the principalship and the catalysts for their movement through those stages. The dual approach of investigating stages and catalysts provided the generic outline for the construction of individual yet comparable Storylines. The process yielded seven phases of perspective development containing four stages and three catalysts. See Table 1: Perspective Development Sequence. The four stages parallel the levels of career influence identified in the Route Maps (childhood and three career intervals) and the catalysts operate at role transitions. Each participant's Storyline contains brief descriptors identifying the essential influences on his or her perspective at each phase. Jack Howard's Storyline is shown in Table 2 and described later in the paper.

The Storyline descriptors are not entirely unique to each participant; instead they operate at a level of abstraction above the personal stories. Thus, each descriptor is applicable to a number of participants. For example, three principals other than Jack were assigned the enjoyed school descriptor and two others the activities (athletics) descriptor. After listing one or two descriptors for each participant at each phase of their story, I then clustered the similar descriptors together into themes of influence for each phase. Further consideration of the themes led to a broad connotation for each stage, which is a general indicator of the sort of influence or perspective growth taking place at that point in a professional journey. Together these connotations represent a generic perspective development sequence for an educational administrator's career. The influence themes and connotations are listed in Table 1.

Pre-Principalship phases. Stage 1, Consideration, takes place in childhood, often, but not exclusively, in the elementary years. Here participants formed their first notions of the value of school and the role of the teacher. While this would seem obvious, the interesting finding is that

each of the participants held a strong positive regard for school and teaching that formed during their childhood years and that continues to sustain them as administrators. None of their experiences along the way, including substantial exposure to external reform efforts declaring schools to be failures and teachers to be insufficiently qualified, had altered this core foundational perspective. Even the participant who declared that she disliked school as a child maintained a positive regard for schools; she credited her feelings to one unpleasant teacher, not the entire school experience. This enduring positive regard for schools and teachers was based on exposure to successful school experiences in their own youth. The origins of these successes are indicated by the influence themes of Stage 1: familial influences, school influences, and activity influences. Familial influences included families that consistently pushed the value of education and worth of schooling, family members who were teachers serving as role models, special family conditions such as a disabled sibling or many siblings that urged one toward a caretaking role, and well-educated parents who served as community leaders. The school influence themes consisted of teachers who were role models and simply enjoying the structured, predictable comfort of a typical school environment. And, the activities cluster included influences such as success with structured, formal youth activities either in-school, such as athletics, or out-of-school, such as 4-H.

The second phase of the journey, Catalyst 1, Into Teaching, captures the influences that guided participants toward the professional career choice of teaching. This phase includes the undergraduate teacher-training experience. Two prominent themes emerged: the impelled themes and the viability themes. The themes of the impelled cluster indicate ways in which individuals were seemingly driven forward into a teaching career through exposure to unforeseen, even sudden, external forces that created a driving internal intensity. For example, the emulation of a

favorite teacher, the influence of a theorist who promoted a novel approach to teaching, or the exposure to a classroom observation as part of a career search process. The influence themes of the viability cluster indicate a movement into teaching for practical reasons and by logically conceived means. Many individuals, the largest group, described the decision to go into teaching as one made mostly because the profession seemed to fit. Others clearly made the decision to enter education as a profession because it would provide a means of matching their topical or activity interests. Put simply, the impelled themes are more idealistic and the viability themes are more rational.

Once in the profession, Stage 2, perspective development for these principals moved toward Differentiation. The learning influences of the first career interval were the particular means by which the participants established themselves as different. These differentiating influences carried forward into their principalship. In other words, in reflecting upon their principalships, each participant came to identify some aspect of their early career that had seized their attention and served as a springboard for leaping out of a typical classroom teacher's appropriately limited or focused perspective and into a "big picture" perspective. The clusters of the Differentiation stage, interest themes and distinction themes, point to their origins. Some participants brought the seeds of a big picture perspective into the profession in the form of specialized interests to be pursued. Others were thrust toward it through distinctive, sometimes discordant experiences that occurred while in the role of teacher. Examples of the specialized interest theme include open school design, religious instruction (in a parochial school), special education, gifted education, staff affairs, and activities, namely athletics. The distinctive theme included the use of unplanned but successful and trend-setting innovative classroom methods,

assignment to many different grade levels, and having to restart a career after a departure, intended or not.

The next phase of the Storyline, Catalyst 2, Into Educational Administration, identifies those specific catalysts that served to drive participants into public school administration. The influences for this phase are clustered as compelled themes and aspired themes. The compelled themes came from participants who felt unexpectedly pushed toward educational administration by a combination of influences, but who then became strongly committed to the move. Those of the aspired cluster purposefully sought out and pursued an administrative career for a variety of logical reasons. The most common influence on participants' move toward administration was a specific request by a current administrator: a compelled theme influence. Other examples include being in the right place at the right time, strong encouragement from respected peers, and a forced redirection, such as downsizing, which prompts one toward a new role. The aspired theme cluster includes influences such as the appeal of an administrative job, or the desire for new challenges, or incitation by some element of the local circumstance. Often, working under the authority of an ineffective principal is a key element of incitation.

The next phases of the Storyline is Initiation, Stage 3, the second career interval, which identifies the influences affecting participants' induction into the actual work of educational administration. Three theme clusters arose for this stage: training influences, immersion influences, and achievement influences. The training theme notes two common, though dissimilar, types of initiation. Many participants found the principal whom they served under in their entry-level administrative posts to be very helpful and influential. These participants came to see those principals as role models and carried many of the modeled strategies or viewpoints into their own principalships. However, other participants found the entry-level administrative

experience to be fairly unremarkable and viewed it simply as a time to learn the day-to-day operations of the role. The immersion cluster reflects the experience of being thrust into a position of considerable responsibility with little actual supervision or immediate peer support, such as through a very quick promotion by the district, or through a teaching principalship, step principalship, principal internship, or interim principalship. For some, such immersion experiences are too quick to be influential but for others they are tremendously formative. And finally, for a few individuals, initiation into administration was marked by a grand effort to achieve a particular end. The aims of the achievement theme were, for two participants, organizational--guiding the development of an open school program, and starting a new middle school--and, for one, a demonstration of a women's capability as an administrator.

The final phase of the Storyline prior to the regular principalship is Catalyst 3: Into the Regular Principalship. The two theme clusters of this phase are propelled and elected influences. Most of the participants were propelled forward into the regular principalship by a variety of conditions under the guise of a regular progression. By a regular progression I mean to indicate a large group of catalytic factors all having in common the normal expectation, by both the individual and those around the individual, that a move to a regular principalship would be the proper next step in one's career. Six participants were moved by the district to fill openings. Four simply continued in their jobs as their status changed from, for example, program director or interim principal to a regular principal. The superintendent asked one to move. And three moved amid a bit of political controversy. One participant who was propelled forward, Henry Swanson, was not expecting to move and was not fully prepared; he was in a temporary teaching principal role when a regular principal in the district departed creating a sudden opening. The other participants elected to move to the principalship for a variety of practical reasons and sought out

open positions. Job appeal was a theme for a few. Incitation played a role for Cindy Foster who left a central office position to move into a principalship as a means of relieving community pressure, which had mounted from some parents who objected to the fact that her husband was also a school administrator in the district. Three participants moved to seek out new challenges and more responsibility.

A remarkable finding came from looking across the Catalyst phases of the Storylines. All of the participants whose stories indicated an impelled theme as a catalyst into teaching, n=11, also indicated a compelled theme as a catalyst into administration. And, most of those who indicated a compelled theme as a catalyst into administration (n=12) also indicated a propelled theme as a catalyst into the regular principalship. There was only one exception to this flow. The consistency of this impelled-compelled-propelled strand is impressive. Similarly interesting is the consistency of the other participants' stories, which indicated the viability-aspired-elected strand. With only one exception, all of those whose stories indicated a viability theme in Catalyst 1 also indicated an aspired theme in Catalyst 2. And, all but four of those who indicated an aspired theme also indicated an elected theme. These four individuals were propelled to a regular principalship by the expectations of a regular progression. The consistency of these two strands helps to highlight the kinds of underlying forces serving as perspective guides for individuals in their professional journeys. They also accentuate the notion that a better grasp of an individual's operative perspective consistency can be gained through a review of a one's biography.

The notion of an operative perspective consistency led to another finding. It became clear to me in the repeated reviews of the profiles that two prominent tones emanated from the individual stories. These tones indicated a propensity in each participant's personal mode or inclination. As I attempted to gain clarity about these impressions I was struck by the idea that

what I was sensing was simply an individual's tendency to operate either more so with a penchant toward sentiment--"a complex combination of feelings and opinions as a basis for action or judgment" (McKechnie, 1983, p. 1653)--or more so with a penchant toward inference--"to derive by reasoning" (p. 938). This designation is not meant to be psychologically authoritative. Instead, it is meant to serve as a most generalized yet fair assessment when a Storyline is consider in comparative analysis with the others of the study. A review of the Storylines through the lenses of these personal inclinations aids an understanding of an individual's operative perspective consistency. It was affirming to discover that those of a personal penchant toward sentiment generally indicated themes of the impelled-compelled-propelled strand, while those of a personal bent toward inference more so indicated themes of the viability-aspired-elected strand.

Principalship phase. The last phase of the perspective development sequence, Phase 7, Declaration, is the regular principalship. In this phase the particular influences on participants' learning varied greatly. After numerous attempts to organize the influences and to draw themes from them, I came to realize that I had accidentally rediscovered Blumberg and Greenfield's (1986) principle finding: the idiosyncratic philosophies of school principals. Thus, in the interest of maintaining the Storyline pattern analysis approach, I switched in this phase from searching for generic descriptors that could be clustered into themes to the identification of particular indicators of each participant's personal philosophy. I found that by looking across the cases for such indicators five broad realms of influence emerged. These five realms can be thought of as identifiers of the common elements of a personal philosophy-in-action (borrowing from Schon's notion of theories-in-action, 1983) of the principalship. The five realms of influence are (a)

conviction--underlying guides, (b) attention--exigencies and endeavors (c) style--operational manner, (d) nurturance--affiliations and support, and (e) enrichment--resources and ideas.

Conviction indicates the underlying conceptual guide that each person mentioned or alluded to in their stories. These are the notions the principals hold as the foundation of their work. Ultimately, their decisions and their sense of direction and commitment to the role are grounded in meaning imbued in these notions. It may be, that to be a leader, one must have such a guide as a means of grounding the typically unstructured and unpredictable flow of the work. Many participants were aware of these guides and stated them directly. For example, "respect for kids" was mentioned numerous times by one participant as the ultimate guide for her decisions and future visions. Another repeatedly talked about working for "that which is enduring." Other examples include "working for the good days," "balancing interests and needs," "pursuing wide interests and avoiding bandwagons of change," and "making a difference takes time." Each underlying guide is unique and describes the idiosyncratic nature of this element of the participants' philosophies. The same holds true for the elements of the other realms.

The elements of the Attention realm are the sorts of factors that draw a principal's attention on a daily basis and thus influence his or her outlook. These things fall into two categories: the exigencies and the endeavors. The diverse list of job exigencies mentioned by the participants was remarkable. By exigencies I mean to refer to those day-to-day demands of the job, both structured and ill structured, that consume the bulk of a principal's labor. Any of the participants of this study, or most other principals, could be faced with these sorts of demands: managing personnel issues, new state policies, a bird in the gym, a broken bus, etc. The category of endeavors is meant to refer to those projects or efforts that a particular principal has taken on for the purposes of enhancing the operation of the school. Generally, these are efforts that are of

some significance for a particular principal. One is drawn to ponder how it is that one principal is pursuing inclusion projects while another is invested in staff study groups and another is committed to implementing a new reading program. Seeing the difference between these unique endeavors and the common exigencies is a key to understanding a principal's perspective formation and learning. Managing exigencies, whether as an expert or a nonexpert, is less likely to be an influence on one's deep perspectives than is a commitment of one's attention to an important, personally chosen endeavor.

The realm of Style indicates the participant's own doctrine of a preferred professional operating manner. These are the ways in which they see themselves as managing or wanting to manage. It is interesting to note that only two of the participants indicated even a slight authoritative tone. Indeed, almost all preferred collaboration and empowerment. A number also indicated a political leaning.

Nurturance identifies where a participant will turn for support when he or she feels distress and is in want of relief for professional dilemmas. The elements of this realm included many predictable sources such as mentors, colleagues and local principals, family members and even supervisors. The surprises were that a number of participants mentioned no sources of nurturing support in difficult times. One participant mentioned being "on your own and without support" and a few mentioned only the opportunity to be around the high energy and positive outlook of the kids for nurturance. One must wonder about the context of a school in which the principal finds no immediate adult sources of affiliation and support.

The final realm is Enrichment. The elements of this realm describe the participants' most notable source for information, ideas, and, at times, solutions. They contain many mentions of expected sources such as staff, supervisors, and the principals' association. As well, many

principals believe themselves to be their own best source of ideas. For them, solutions come from experience and their own private interpretation of it. Though a few participants mentioned theorists, these were theorists who had become mentors. Indeed, the indication from this realm is that the typical educational researcher, theorist, academic, or staff developer rarely serves as a source of new ideas for the participants of this study. Their own peers and colleagues are much more influential as resources. (A confirmation of conventional wisdom.)

The realms of the Declaration phase provide a means of considering particular aspects of a principal's philosophy-in-action against a backdrop of the biographic influences detailed in the first six phases of the Storyline. A consideration of this sort is an effective means of uncovering significant threads of influence that weave through an individual's background and serve as a foundation for perspective formation and transformation. This is the target of the third set of research questions. Identifying such threads of influence for each participant and examining how they affect one's learning was the focus of the final wave of analysis for the project as reviewed below. In whole, Storyline analysis addresses the second set of research questions by providing a means of identifying underlying patterns of influence affecting the perspective development of principals. The four stages and three catalysts signify broad influence patterns, while the themes of each phase, and the elements of one's philosophy-in-action, provide specific templates of influence.

Threads of Learning

In addressing the first two sets of research questions, I have established a means of delineating common pathways to the principalship and a means of identifying formative influences on a principal's perspective through the phases of a professional journey. Examining how a particular set of influences emerges from an individual's biography to affect daily practice

will address the final set of questions. As a demonstration of how this can be done using the generic narrative codes devised here, I will present the constructed learning stories of four representative participants. The stories are constructed in layers. Each layer spirals through the data collected for a participant drawing a reader closer to the essential experience of that participant. The surface layers are composed from objective biographic data. The core layers involve my interpretation of the connecting thread that weaves through the participant's learning stories. While it is clear that the best way to grasp a full appreciation of an individual's story is through personal conversation with each, the goal of this project is to provide an effective means of capturing the nature of their learning stories in an abridge, easily studied, and repeatable manner.

Jack Howard: Mentors and Colleagues. At the time of the interview, Jack was the principal of an urban high school. He was in the 46-50-age range, was married, and is white, the most prevalent groups of the sample. However, Jack was one of only two participants who did not affiliate with any religious group. He held a doctorate as his highest degree, as did seven other participants. He had fifteen years of experience in educational administration, which, again, was an amount in accordance with the bulk of the principals. Thus, in some ways Jack was a typical portrayal of the sample, in others he was less typical, and in one way he was an outlier. These data points constitute the surface-most layer of Jack's story.

Jack's route to the principalship, as described previously, was coded as P-O-STT-T(5)-AP(13)-RP(2). Jack had a positive early exposure to school. He planned for a career in a field other than education but switched to a teacher-training program in college. He taught for five years, then moved to an assistant principalship for thirteen years and spent the last two years as a regular principal. Eight other participants switched to a teacher-training program while in

college, which is a large quantity for a sample of twenty-three people. Six others taught for five years or less. Only two others had similar experience levels in Career Interval 2 positions, though many others were at a similar experience level in their tenure as regular principals. Thus, while Jack's overall educational administrative experience was in the typical range (10-19 years) he came about it in an unusual fashion with the bulk of his time in Career Interval 2. Jack's route (T-AP-RP) is a variant of the classic route group and is the most popular and efficient of all routes.

The next layer of Jack's story can be constructed using Jack's Storyline, as depicted in Table 2. Jack enjoyed school as a child and enjoyed the athletic programs in particular. This enjoyment formed the basis of his embryonic consideration of education as a career choice. Jack's route map, though, indicates that he entered college with career plans other than education. The catalyst for Jack's move into a teaching career was his connection to an educational theorist who employed a novel approach. Though the data does not reveal the exact means by which Jack became involved with the theorist, it gives enough information to know that Jack was influenced by the theorist's innovative approach to teaching and was inspired to embrace teaching as a career. And, indeed, Jack differentiated himself during the first interval of his career by developing and employing innovative classroom teaching methods. Next, the catalyst for Jack's move into educational administration was a necessary career redirection caused by downsizing in his home district. He took the opportunity to move in a new professional direction instead of continuing a teaching career in another area. His route map shows that this move was to an assistant principalship.

Once in his assistant principal position Jack's primary initiation into the realm of educational administration came through his connection to a few model individuals: a principal

that he worked with and another educational theorist. Also, his catalyst to a regular principalship was the expectation of a regular progression but his move was colored by political muddle. For some reason, his assistant principal situation became fraught with political pressures and propelled him toward a new role. The importance of this political ambiance is further bolstered by Jack's thirteen years in the assistant principal role. Since it is unlikely that he would spend so long in an uncomfortable situation, something changed in his home district that caused an otherwise pleasant professional experience to become uncomfortable enough to spur his movement.

The third interval of Jack's career, the regular principalship, provides another layer of understanding about the influences on his learning through the elements of his philosophy-in-action of the principalship. Jack's primary conviction regarding his role as a principal, his underlying personal guide to his professional work, is a vision of himself as a learner. As such, his responsibility is to serve as a mediator of others' learning instead of performing as an authority figure. The exigencies that pulled Jack's attention on a daily basis included a staff run professional development discussion group, which he joins, and a recent series of student hazing incidents, which required crisis management. His endeavors included an effort to implement shared management throughout the school and a campaign to reduce the dropout rate, a chronic problem of urban high schools. Jack described his management style as a tendency to throw chaos into a system and to allow it to self-organize. Here we see the language of one of his favored organizational theorists and further evidence of his tendency to appreciate novel and innovative thinking. When Jack is in greatest need, when he feels distress and is in want of relieve for professional dilemmas, he turns for support to a mentor and a national group of

colleagues. And, finally, the primary resources Jack employs for professional enrichment are theorists and both national and local colleagues.

A final data item can be noted regarding the influences on Jack's perspective development. His story follows the impelled-compelled-propelled strand and indicates a personal inclination toward the use of sentiment more so then toward the use of inference.

Jack has had three rough transitions, the first two requiring redirection and the third permeated by politics. However, the stages of his professional journey have been filled with salutary experiences, indicating a profound positive regard for the value of education. Along the way, he has connected with and been influenced by particular individuals and has been a proponent of innovative practices. Jack's Storyline reads like that of a risk-taker who finds strength and inspiration in his personal relationships, particularly those with experts and mentors. This insight is strengthened by the tone of sentiment and adherence to the impelled-compelled-propelled strand. The Storyline also presents someone who has a penchant for the theoretical endeavors of education, remembering his Ph.D. Jack's tendency as a risk-taker is further verified by his attempts to venture into shared management of the school and to take on as vexing a problem as the dropout rate. The chaos-inducing mode also aids this image. His connection to specific individuals, colleagues and mentors, particularly theorists and experts, continues to be an important concern. And, Jack's deep appreciation for the foundational issues of education appears in his commitment to his own learning and his participation in the professional development discussion group.

Overall, then, Jack's perspective of himself as a principal has developed by way of a primary thread of learning that has been present over his lifetime. This dominant thread involves Jack's tendency to form close personal connections with specific individuals, particularly

individuals who have innovative and novel ways of thinking about education and who become mentors and colleagues. His personal connection to knowledgeable others who believe in him has been a topic consistently threading through his life from childhood teachers and coaches to mentoring professionals. His perspective has been formed and transformed through relationships with such people. His penchant for risk taking is closely associated with these relationships; they serve as a springboard for action. He continues to believe in the value of formal education in its contemporary form, an appreciation deeply embedded from his own experience as a shy child who found emotional connection and relief in school and athletics. Yet, he has initiated reforms to address one of the toughest dilemmas of the urban school, the high dropout rate. His beliefs about why kids drop out and what needs to be done have evolved through his connections to particular theorist. Instead of seeing the problem in terms of, for example, class or race as some others may, he sees it as a thinking skills dilemma and a personal efficacy issue. (Thinking skills is the general name of an educational improvement movement that promotes the enhancement of students' cognitive strategies, such as planning and problem solving, as a means of securing school success.) Solving it, ultimately, involves working with teachers and other staff members to enhance their repertoire of framing strategies so as to increase student acceptance of the material through better understanding. These beliefs are bolstered by readings, reflections, and experience, but their origination came through personally rewarding and caring relationships with a particular principal and an educational theorist who promoted a thinking skills approach.

This study cannot declare, ultimately, why Jack's learning is so essentially linked to his association with others. However, the data shows a clear pattern to the process of his formative and transformative perspective development which involves close associations with mentoring, knowledgeable others (The importance of intimate relationships as an element of professional

learning is not prominent in the adult learning literature, but it is present in organizational studies via Wheatley, 1994, Burns, 1978, Foster, 1989, and others, as well as, slightly, in the principalship literature via Beck, 1994). His future learning will surely continue to follow this pattern. Thus, a staff member, an educational reformer, or principal educator who wished to touch Jack's perspective would be more likely to be successful if the effort was based on a genuinely caring and knowledge-rich relationship. I have presented Jack's learning story in great detail for the purposes of demonstrating the generic narrative model in process. The remaining three case presentations will be condensed to save space.

Robert Gray: Social Context. Robert Gray, P-TT-T(18)-AP(2)-RP(5), was in the fifth year of his first principalship when I spoke with him. Here is his Storyline in brief: his family pushed the value of education and he went into teaching as a first career choice because it fit for him; he taught for eighteen years and moved all around the elementary grades then pursued an administrative career for a new challenge; the district moved him through an assistant principalship very quickly and on to the principalship. His Storyline follows the viability-aspired-propelled strand and it matches the tone of a personal inclination for inference.

When describing his work and the origin of his perspective, Robert made many references to how he learned through action, on the job. Though Jack might agree with the essence of Robert's statements about the importance of learning on the job, there is a fundamental difference in the way their perspectives are affected. Whereas Jack's story indicated that his close association with others served as the connecting thread of his perspective development, Robert's story indicated that his perspective has been mostly shaped by the circumstances of the situations he has been in. He, for example, sees his basic values as having been molded through "life experiences and academic preparation and professional experience."

The themes of Robert's Storyline augment this situational thread (see Jarvis, 1992, 1987). His movement into education and through the profession was marked by contextual factors--family pushing education, into teaching for its fit, shifting around the elementary grades as a teacher, into administration for a new challenge, and a dunking as his administrative initiation. This contrasts with Jack's relational thread. Robert had very little to say about the influences of significant mentors and indicated that it was his connection to the kids, not peers, which gave him strength in tough times. Even the notable endeavor he champions, inclusion, has a situational foundation which weaved through his entire career:

P I'm a real strong advocate of families with disabilities . . . as a result of that my school is a real strong advocate of families with disabilities. Not because I told them to be, it's because I've talked it, I've walked it, we've seen the benefits of it. We're an inclusion site and we've expanded. An inclusion site means we have a program here for students with very profound mental disabilities. The child that was normally segregated in another school. That's kind of the heart and soul of this school.

I Do you remember how you started getting interested in individuals with disabilities?

P Yeah, some of it is because I am a person of color. But largely, you know, I've not experienced, overt and blatant vicious racism a whole lot in my life, so I'm not a bitter person, and I'm not big on integration and all that stuff just because I've been so hurt by racism but because of what I've seen discrimination and racism and sexism and all of this stuff do to attitudes and outlooks, and what it does to us, and what it's done to this country, what it's done to the world, and am just really, really against it. The group that I've seen . . . so terribly, terribly ostracized and maligned and ridiculed and discriminated against have been people with disabilities--and children teased, and how hurtful that must

be. I grew up in the 50's and 60's and I know the feeling of inferior. I know that feeling and it's still there, and it's something that I've overcome. But it's still there. You do feel inferior because you're a black man. I think that's one of the reasons you see black males in particular lash out so. One way to get power is to be in a gang or to be physically superior, or to be able to fight. You know, because you don't have the power by being franchised, you don't have the capitalistic power. You're weak, so you get power other ways. I forget how many hundreds and hundreds of negative terms are associated with the word "black" in the dictionary, as opposed to "white." In so many aspects of your life you're subtly and overtly made to feel inferior and you do begin to feel inferior. You're ashamed of your skin color, you stay out of the sun because you don't want to get darker. So, I know the feeling first hand. And I have tremendous self-esteem problems. I have done just short of genius in overcoming them and not letting them sit out there in front of me. So, when I imagine if I had disabilities also . . . at least when I walk down the street I can look good, I can put on a suit. Imagine if you're walking down the street and you're drooling at the mouth or you're limping to one side or your face looks different and you can't control when you're going to yell. But you've got all of these feelings and awareness inside of you, but it's trapped inside of this body and you can't communicate it to people. And then on top of that you got people laughing at you, looking at you crazy, discriminating against you. It's a strong, strong personal feeling.

This powerful and intimate excerpt is a dramatic example of the connection between an individual's personal and professional realms, a consistent finding of this study. Jack Howard's endeavor to implement shared management through the use of thinking skills concords with his personal struggle regarding his own intellectual image, a struggle which was manifest by the

profound effect of being considered smart by his mentor principal. Robert Gray's personal experience with a social context of discrimination affected his professional endeavor to create a widely inclusive school. Each pursued a popular reform initiative in his own unique style as a deeply personal undertaking, yet, each came to his perspective regarding the importance of the initiative through notably different means: Jack through intimate professional relationships with knowledgeable others, and Robert through an assessment of his situational context. While each was heading in the similar direction of end-value, transformational leadership (Burns, 1978), Jack's Storyline suggested a personal inclination more so toward sentiment and Robert's suggested a personal inclination more so toward inference. Thus, both individuals' stories indicate the interplay of the influencing factors that Burns claimed as the foundation of a leader's outlook--biological, social, and political--and the idiosyncratic philosophies that Blumberg and Greenfield (1986) found. The result, for the purposes of this study, is that learning among these two principals (as well as the other participants) can be said to be similar in its connection to their personal natures and the way in which it threads through their biographies, different in its theoretical manifestation--primarily relational versus primarily situational--and idiosyncratic in its execution.

Shirley Franklin: To Be Out and About. Shirley Franklin, N-O-STT-T(3)-T/TL(9)-AP(1)-RP(11), was an urban elementary school principal with twelve years of administrative experience when I spoke with her. She followed a teacher leader-to-assistant principal route to the principalship after switching to education in college--she did a classroom observation as part of a career search and was hooked. Her early school experience was negative, yet since some family members were educators, her mom and sister-in-law, she held a positive regard for the profession and for school in general. Her Storyline indicates a personal inclination of sentiment, the

impelled-compelled-propelled strand and family, interest area, and immersion learning themes. This is the Storyline of someone who has strong feelings about the importance of making schools work well for kids, based, likely, on her own unpleasant childhood exposure to school, and who has been thrust through her career with that sentiment. While her entire story is very intriguing, at this point I want to look at how best to grasp the dominant thread of her learning; here is her own description of it:

> [After teaching for a few years in my first job] I was supposed to go to another school because we didn't have a teacher-of-color in the building; I was the least senior, so I had to go. They found another job for me at another school, leading the resource lab. For me it was perfect because I really felt confined in the classroom, I really didn't want to stay there. And I saw these jobs, Title I jobs, and I really wanted to do that. So I started my Masters program right away . . . I really wanted to stay out of the classroom. Then as I got into the coordination and curriculum piece, people encouraged me to go into administration. I really had a feel for having a handle on everything, making things go and keeping them moving. Even though I didn't have the bottom line responsibility and I didn't know what that was all about, I thought that [administration] was a possibility because I didn't think I'd be able to stay out of the classroom otherwise. And that was really driving me; I really didn't want to go to a classroom. I would have felt like it was claustrophobic, even though I enjoyed it, I didn't see myself doing that again . . . it was too confining, I couldn't handle it. Not in terms of being mentally ill or anything like that, it was just too small. I needed something bigger and I needed to be out and about. I found that I loved the curriculum coordination job. It was a great job. We had a great time and excellent people. Good time. But I knew I couldn't stay there forever either. So, I went

> back and started my [education specialist] right away . . . Because I didn't want to go back to the classroom and I wanted to have as many options as possible. So, in case the Chapter 1 or Title I job fell through, I would have had [the option of going into administration]. I really kind of thought maybe I could do [a principalship], not really knowing what it was all about and how much responsibility it was. So, I finished the [specialist] and . . . I applied for assistant principal and it came through.

The thread which connects together Shirley's professional career is a unique personal characteristic, that is, her need to do something bigger, to be out and about (see Knowles, 1990; Claxton, 1996). This strong personal characteristic ushered her into teaching, and then into teacher leadership positions, and then into administration, and it continues to affect her professional manner. Her first principalship involved starting the first preschool program in a large urban district. When she was moved to her second principalship to revitalize a troubled elementary school, she convinced the superintendent to allow her to convert it to an arts magnet middle school, which gave her the impetus and freedom to make personnel changes. She is currently involved in a leadership development partnership between the district and local business groups, she has established her school as a teacher training site in coordination with local universities, and she is working with the local principal's association to generate a new vision for principal initiation and support programs. These are big, out-and-about endeavors which fit the realm of strong administrative leaders. However, she did not describe the sort of quest for power that Burns (1978) declares as a driving force of leaders. She has been a reluctant leader. She resisted a career in education until she was hooked into it. She resisted teaching in urban schools until she was tagged by her supervisor at the suburban school in which she student taught as a good candidate for an urban environment. She was hesitant in making the

administrative moves required by the district. One can easily see in her story that for her leadership is simply a matter of being in positions where she is able to operate according to her natural attributes of creativity and organization. Her underlying desire to make life better for kids than that which she experienced as a student has guided her in each role, but it is her basic knack for operating well in a complex environment through the implementation of broad organizing schemes that served as the dominant thread instigating her movement and learning.

John Jerome: Keeping focused. John Jerome, P-TT-T/TL(11)-SP(8)-MAP(2)-RP(4), developed a positive regard for education from other family members who were teachers and a pure enjoyment of the school experience as a child, he chose teaching as a career because it seemed to fit, he differentiated himself as a teacher by become a coach and a union representative, moved into administration to fill a sudden opening in the district and to seek out new challenges, his service in the step principalship was functional and problem-solving oriented, and finally, he sought out a move to the regular principalship when again looking for new challenges. His underlying guide as a principal is working for the good days (those with few problems) and keeping focused on the "long haul;" his attention is drawn entirely by the exigencies of the role, particularly discipline and personnel concerns, as there are no endeavors he is currently pursuing; he operates by building relationships with stakeholders; he gets nurturance from a mentor and a few colleagues; and, he looks for enrichment in continuing professional development work and through personal reflection. This last point is the most salient regarding John's ongoing learning; here is how he described it:

P Sometimes you just get glimmers of inspiration, you know. You'll be driving back from class . . . thinking, or not, and then all of a sudden, here's this new understanding that you have.

I Has that been a consistent experience for you?

P Yeah, I'd say so. You have to be contemplative and you have to evaluate your own performance. You have to be mindful of what's going on and really, you know, have a good understanding of what all the dynamics are, how they intermesh. And, you don't have time during the course of the day to think about those things because you're just responding and doing them. And so, only in other times, you know, do these things seem to happen to you. It's almost like a serendipitous type of thing.

I It seems that a person would need to pay attention to those glimmers in order to make them real. Do you have any ideas about how you might have learned to pay attention to them?

P Well, for me personally, I have to have a, I'll call it a scheme; I don't know what else to call it. I adopt schemes or perspectives that carry me from one point in time to another point in time, kind of a vision on the future, so that you're always future oriented. Anything that comes your way that can be a help, and they're usually positive things, you have to take advantage of those things. If it's a negative glimmer, I'll throw it away because it's not going to do me any good. If it's an unrealistic glimmer, or an illegal glimmer, something outside the realm of possibility glimmer, then it goes, because it's not going to be helpful to me. If it's something that sounds positive and involves the organization, the school organization, the school community, and it's something that makes sense, and it's something that's doable [I'll keep it].

I Did you have the same approach when you were a teacher?

P I think that's pretty much me as a person. It helps me. It's helped me in lots of different ways . . . You may go through a period of time that you're kind of glimmerless, so to

speak, but you're always operating with some scheme or some perspective or some vision in mind.

The perspective on learning expressed here resembles Mezirow's (1996, 1991) theory of adult learning and is supported by other cognitivists' notions of professional learning (Brookfield, 1986; Candy, 1991; Kolb, 1984; Schon, 1983). Indeed, whereas Jack's thread of learning indicates the influence of relationships, Robert's indicates the influence of social context, and Shirley's indicates the influence of a particular personal characteristic, John's indicates the influence of professional reflection.

Comparison of the cases of Jack and John more clearly reveal the thread of learning at work. While John talked quite a bit about the importance of collegial support and his connection to a particular mentor, his references to them had a much different tone than Jack's. John's connection to his peers and his mentor is different in that John's dominant thread of learning has to do, primarily, with a personal bent toward inference versus sentiment. John sees his connection to others as a means of getting something accomplished, while Jack sees his connections as a source of personal fulfillment and professional inspiration. This contrast does not serve to grade John's and Jack's success, status, or humanity it simply helps to highlight the best means of understanding their perspective and approach to learning. At first, it seems oddly paradoxical to see that Jack's dominant thread of learning has to do with establishing intimate professional relationships with others yet his own avenue for operation focuses on enhancing others' thinking skills, while John's dominant thread of learning has to do with reflection on cognitive schemes and yet his own operating style is leaning toward relationship building. However, a closer look reveals a pattern. Jack's dominant thread for learning led him to establish a relationship with an educational expert who happened to be promoting a thinking skills

approach at a time when he needed something new. Also, his personal struggle with his view of his own intellectual capabilities is partially resolved through an investment in thinking skills as a formal channel for developing a domain expertise. Similarly, John's dominant thread has led him to a dispassionate analysis of the labor of his role and toward a solution meant to enhance the overall efficiency of the system. John's interest in relationships is functional and makes sense. For John, relationships are commodities: he accumulates them as elements of his professional social capital to be spent in future times of crisis or need. This drive for efficient and effective operation can also be seen in the conviction element of John's professional philosophy, the underlying guide which moves with him through his work: you work for the good days and keep focused on the long haul.

These four stories are representative of the sample. While each is unique, each can be read in a structured manner that enhances comparison yet preserves the individual flair. The four dominant themes that emerged from the threads of learning influences in these stories were consistent across the others: a relational thread, a social context thread, a personal characteristic thread, and a reflective/conceptual thread. In various combinations, and in different strengths, threads of these themes seemed to weave through a principal's stories to form a consistent strand holding together different experiences and interpretations.

## Discussion

A number of interesting insights emerge from this inquiry into the influences on participants' perspective formation. The study confirms, and establishes many details about, the biographic and idiosyncratic nature of principal learning. Indeed, one of the most potent findings is the continuing influence of early childhood exposures. As previously demonstrated, these exposures serve as a foundation for the construction of mature perspectives and philosophies. In

particular, the positive regard for school and teachers formed in the Consideration stage continues to drive these educators in their life-long effort to work for the well being of children. Additionally, there were numerous instances in the stories of early childhood exposures being carried directly into a principal's professional realm. Consider these excerpts:

> I had an English teacher that made . . . learning fun: my high school English teacher. He was a very demanding and yet understanding teacher. Those are two characteristics I always kind of admired. Now when I hire teachers, or anybody else, that's one of the things I always look for. As I observe classrooms what I do is see that a person's demanding, expects a lot of kids, but also can be understanding of individual differences that kids have. And that takes some experience I think. It takes some working with kids and understanding when you give and when you don't. (Ron Hill)
>
> I really don't believe in failure and that is something else I grew up with. We weren't allowed to say, "Can't" and my mom would say " 'Can't' is dead and 'Should have' kill it!" which meant enough of the broken record. But when I started to teach I would not allow students to say, "Can't" because I said "If you say 'can't' you are already defeated. So you can say to me 'It is difficult' but don't tell me you can't." And students would say to me, "Ms. Harding, I ca..., I mean, it is difficult." I would say, "Ok, now we got some hope and we can start to work on it." So that was kind of my attitude. (Rita Harding)

The continuing potency of childhood influences on one's professional realm, both foundationally and directly, may help to explain why it seems so difficult and frustrating to some reformers to attempt to implement new educational initiatives. It may not be simply because educational professionals are resistant to change. Instead, it may be that reform proposals and new initiatives are too frequently based on negative images of schools and teachers or are presented in abstract,

over-rational, impersonal packages that have no connection to, or fit with, educators' childhood experiences or enduring positive regard for schooling. (It would make sense in American culture, where childhood is treated as preparation for adulthood and where childhood experiences of all sorts are touted as life determining, to find that such childhood influences are prominent in many realms of adult life. For example, Finders & Lewis, 1994, show that sometimes teachers' efforts to engage parents are thwarted by the parents' negative images of school that are a result of their own childhood experiences. It would be interesting to study educational reformers' perspectives for enduring childhood influences regarding schooling.) Mezirow (1991), for one, recognizes this predicament of adult learning and suggests using critical dialogue and building emotional will as a means of enabling adults to struggle through a reframing of the meaning schemes and perspectives developed by such childhood influences. (It is noteworthy, though, that the limitations of Mezirow's approach have also been revealed in this study: Jack's learning was influenced more so by mentoring relationships, Robert's more so by social context, and Shirley's more so by a personal characteristic. While critical dialogue would be effective with these principals, it would likely, be less effective than with John.)

Another, related, finding is that most participants gave strong credit to an interpersonal factor--connection to a family member or teacher--with having had a significant influence on their consideration of education as a profession. This resonates with the conclusion of Blumberg and Greenfield (1986) that the one thing the principals they interviewed had in common was a tendency to operate as "people administrators" (p. 144). It also corresponds with Donaldson's (1991) third functional skill of principals--building relationships--and his second essential quality--enjoying personal contact. It is likely that such tendencies emerge early in one's life. This is not to imply that one can mold a person toward a principalship by exposing him or her to

the factors mentioned above, but, instead, that a person with a positive regard for education molded through interpersonal influences may be thusly inclined.

Also, it is noteworthy that success with school or an organized youth activity (i.e. athletics, 4-H, church group) showed-up frequently as a significant indicator. It makes sense that having some success with a school-like enterprise would serve as a foundation for one's positive regard for education, the quintessential organized youth activity. Many participants mentioned, as do so many educators, a desire to "give back" or to "share" with others the enjoyment they experienced. It may be that such giving back means helping others to achieve a sense of personal competence through successful accomplishment. This might indicate to some readers a rational desire on the educators' part to maintain the educational system in a familiar condition so that the sharing can be accomplished through the same means and processes experienced in their own youth. However, a broader interpretation, and one that I favor following these interviews, is that education is, at its best, an interpersonal and affective affair and that what educators hope to achieve in giving back is the creation among students of a positive feeling for oneself and a positive regard for learning through successful accomplishments. The best way they know how to do so, from their own embedded experience, is through an organized and highly structured activity such as school. In this way a positive regard for education--again, in its essence as a formal activity--gets carried along from generation-to-generation through personal interaction in the consideration stage. Following this, and recognizing that only one member of this study group had any formative professional experience outside of the field of education, it may be that the only visceral means many educators have available to them to give back is through the structure of a formal activity since that has been their dominant paradigm of operation from childhood through their professional lives.

In addition to the lasting effects of childhood influences, there are many interesting findings about perspective development throughout a career as well. It may not surprise many readers to find that Phase 2 of the Perspective Development Sequence, which for most participants included their undergraduate training in education, was not a fertile ground for stories of lifelong formative influences on one's professional outlook. Paradoxically, this could be seen as both a positive and a negative finding depending upon one's ideological interpretation of such programs. Clearly, very powerful notions about children, learning, schools, teachers, and society are carried right through this training period with little alteration. (Gardner, 1991, provides a potential theoretical grounding for such a finding.) It seems, then, that it is these notions which serve as the primary foundation upon which one's perspective as a teacher reside. As well, though, a few participants did attribute a large measure of influence in this phase to a particular educational theorist, indicating the possibility for perspective learning while a prospective teacher. However, this phase did serve a powerful role as a storehouse of catalysts spurring some individuals to venture into teaching for a profession. Though most had chosen to pursue a teaching career before entering college, almost half entered college with other career plans. Of these, a few became excited about teaching after exposure to a novel instructor or theorist, a few after sitting in on a classroom observation as part of a career exploration process, and a few after deciding that a teaching career would fit their interest in children's development and their need for a feasible middle-class profession. One must wonder, then, if an attempt should be made to make the undergraduate teacher-training experience more formative or if, despite all such attempts, it will always remain part of a transitional, rather fuzzy career exploration experience. Clearly, it seems from this study, the most fruitful means of making it more formative would be through a participatory critique of students' own childhood school

experiences and by engaging with students' unique thread of learning, that is their own fledgling idiosyncratic perspective. Indeed, attending to these two elements would seem both possible and practical in undergraduate programs with the potential for stunningly powerful transformative learning experiences as a result.

The teacher leader roles as venues for formative experiences present another notable finding of the study. Little mention is made in principalship preparation texts or in principal reform movements of the lasting value of pre-administrative leadership posts and their influence on the careers of aspiring principals. The participants who followed the teacher leader routes brought eminent on-the-job quasi-administrative training with them into their educational administrative training programs and, later, into their principalship positions. The teacher leader positions serve as an area for potential input by those hoping to influence the perspectives of the next generation of principals. With the looming need for qualified principals over the next few years, it would be appropriate to begin to cultivate a larger candidate pool by expanding leadership opportunities for teachers. Perhaps principal educators could serve those in these positions with mentoring and leadership training specifically targeted to pre-administrative leadership training.

Studying the elements of a principal's philosophies-in-action helps to confirm the idiosyncratic nature of principal learning and practice. In order to be fully perceived, each principal's learning must be viewed within the context of his or her own Storyline, with its operative perspective consistency, and personal philosophy-in-action. As demonstrated, this does not mean that there is little to be said about professional learning among principals at the level of theoretical abstraction. The analytic routines devised for this study present practical possibilities for those who wish to touch the inner world perspectives of aspiring and veteran school leaders

even though the complexity of such an effort has been shown to be formidable. On one hand, principal educators must cultivate an understanding of each individual as an idiosyncratic being; a very complicated, time consuming, and perpetual endeavor. On the other hand, the Route Maps, Storyline analysis, and thread-of-learning analysis presented here demonstrate a means of advancing such an undertaking. Principal educators can proceed by (a) listening to a principal's stories of lifelong significant learning experiences, perhaps through a perspective interview; (b) examining the themes of learning influences throughout his or her biography using the analytic tools demonstrated in this study--a Route Map and a Storyline; and, (c) searching for a dominant thread of learning which weaves through the stories. Daunting perhaps, but effective.

In a final note, it became evident, as indicated previously, through the detailed reading of the stories that the threads of learning influences seemed to emphasize various combinations of four approaches to learning: relational, contextual, characteristic, and conceptual. Three of these four approaches are clearly described in adult learning literature and promoted by various theorists. For example, Jarvis, 1987, has developed a theory of adult learning based on social context, Knowles, 1990, provides a comprehensive analysis of adult learning based on personal characteristics, and Mezirow, 1991, developed a theory of adult learning based on reflection and reinterpretation of meaning schemes. The adult learning literature does not provide as prevalent a model of learning based on relationships, but writers in other areas do point to, and speculate about, the possibilities for one (Beck, 1994; Burns, 1978; Wheatley, 1994). This finding supports further work on principal learning by providing a potential grounding for theoretical development to compliment the structural routines of analysis devised here. Also, and potentially most profound, this study highlights a need to expand current adult learning theory into a new

realm--relationship based learning--and to establish a meta-theory to encompass the four approaches.

## Conclusion

This study presents evidence that the continuing inner world learning of veteran school principals can be considered to have a foundation in childhood exposures, to have a strong connection to personal concerns, to be influenced by identifiable themes through specific phases of a professional journey of perspective development, and to have a recognizable dominant thread. Additionally, though each individual's learning can only be genuinely understood as a unique phenomenon, the four approaches that emerged here—relational, contextual, conceptual, and characteristic--provide a theoretical foundation for exploring that idiosyncratic nature, with the caution that a dynamic blending of each approach is needed to understand each learner. And finally, though there are inherent limitations to a study that relies on researcher interpretations of participants' recalled stories of significant learning events, this project provides a number of practical notions and techniques that can be used by principal educators or reformers who strive to affect educational quality via the principalship. The perspective interview is a means of mutually exploring biographic stories. Route mapping, the Pathways Flowchart, Storyline pattern analysis, and the search for dominant threads taken together provide a means of coming to an understanding of, and thus an ability to touch, the professional perspective of principals. Also, the four stories presented here, with their rich detail and sometimes intimate portrayals, serve as examples of the sorts of generic narrative models upon which might be built a comprehensive theory of the principalship.

Figure 1: PATHWAYS TO THE PRINCIPALSHIP

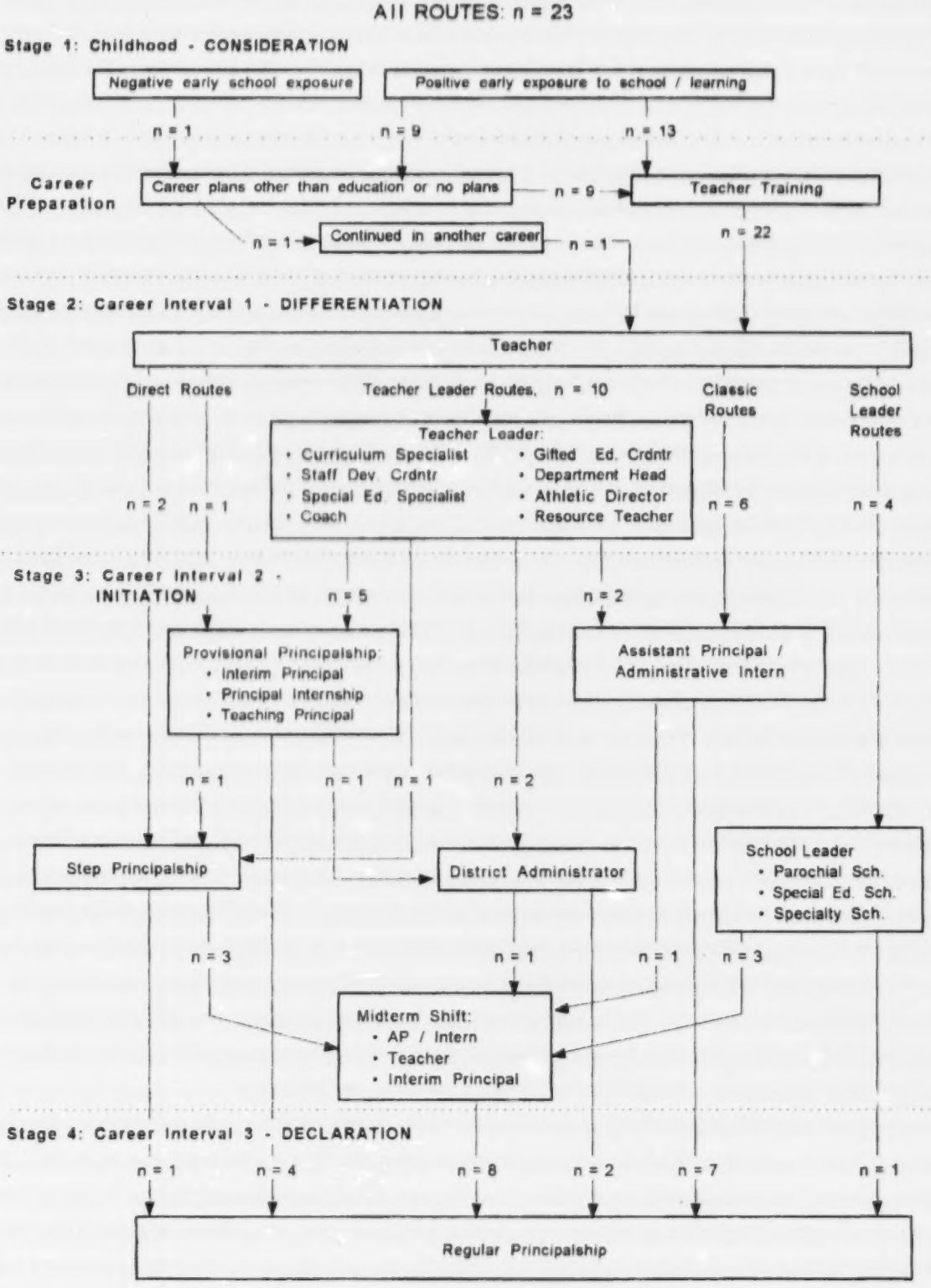




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Table 1

Perspective Development Sequence: Storyline Connotations & Influence Themes

Phase 1 Stage 1: Childhood Influences: Consideration (Forming a positive regard for school.)

- familial, school, and activity influence themes

Phase 2 Catalyst 1: First Transition: Into Teaching

- impelled and viability influence themes

Phase 3 Stage 2: Teacher/Teacher Leader: Differentiation (Obtaining the big picture view.)

- interest and distinction influence themes

Phase 4 Catalyst 2: Second Transition: Into Educational Administration

- compelled and aspired influence themes

Phase 5 Stage 3: Ed. Admin. Initiation: (Establishing first impression of the role.)

- training, immersion, and achievement influence themes

Phase 6 Catalyst 3: Third Transition: Into the Principalship

- propelled and elected influence themes

Phase 7 Stage 4: Regular Principalship: Declaration

> Conviction (underlying guide)

> Attention

- Exigencies (day-to-day demands)
- Endeavors (special interests)

> Style (operational manner)

> Nurturance (affiliation and support)

> Enrichment (resources and ideas)

Table 2

Jack Howard's Storyline

Stage 1: Childhood Influences: enjoyed school, activities (athletics)

Catalyst 1: First Transition: theorist (novel approach)

Stage 2: Teacher/Teacher Leader: innovative classroom methods

Catalyst 2: Second Transition: redirection (downsizing)

Stage 3: Ed. Admin. Initiation: role model (principal & ed. theorist)

Catalyst 3: Third Transition: regular progression (political)

Stage 4: Regular Principalship

> Conviction (underlying guide): learner / principal as mediator

> Attention (pull on time and energy)

- Exigencies: discussion groups, hazing
- Endeavors. shared management, drop-out rate

> Style (operational manner): creates chaos & allows self-organization

> Nurturance (affiliation and support): national colleagues, mentors

> Enrichment (resources and ideas): theorists, local colleagues

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